



Abuse in Care
Royal Commission of Inquiry

**Te Whakatewhatewhatanga o te
Manga Tamariki me te Rangatahi ki
Lake Alice Inquiry into the
Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit**



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November 2022**



Before you read this report



This is an Easy Read summary of a report written by the **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.**



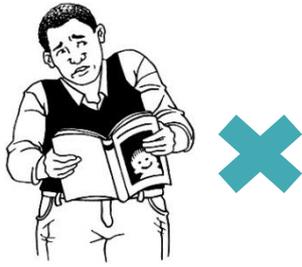
In this Easy Read report we will call the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care the **Commission.**



This document will give people information about the things that the Commission has found out about 1 place looked at closely by the Commission.



Some of the information in this document may upset people when they are reading it.



This information is not meant to scare anyone.



If you do not feel safe right now call the Police on **111**.



If you are worried or concerned after reading this document you can talk about it with:



- your family / friends
- your support workers.



If you are still worried you can also talk to someone at the Commission:



Phone: 0800 222 727



Email: contact@abuseincare.org.nz

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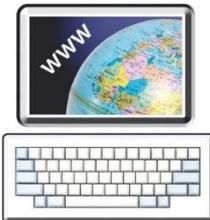
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What is this document about?



This is an Easy Read **summary** of a report written by the Commission.



A **summary** is:

- shorter than the full report
- tells you the main ideas.

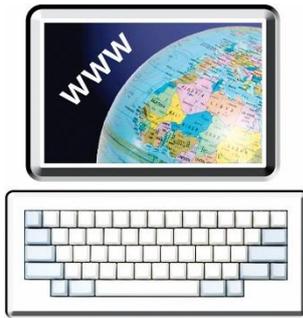
The full report is called:

Tamariki Ātaahua - Beautiful Children

**Te Whakatewhatewhatanga o te
Manga Tamariki me te Rangatahi ki**

**Lake Alice Inquiry into the
Lake Alice Child and Adolescent
Unit.**





You can find the full report on this **website:**

www.abuseincare.org.nz



Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit was a care unit for:

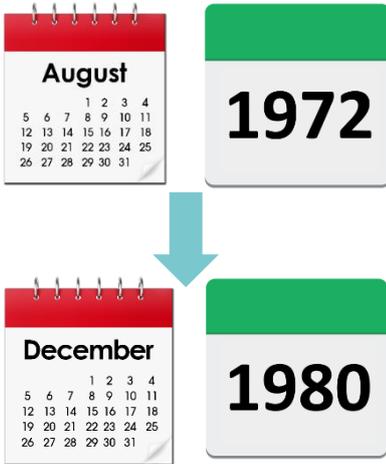
- children
- **adolescents.**



Adolescents means young people aged 18 years and younger.



This summary report is about things that happened to children and young people at Lake Alice from:



- August 1972
- to
- December 1980.



This report also looks at what things happened that meant the abuse could happen for so many years.



The Lake Alice case study is part of a full inquiry by the **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.**

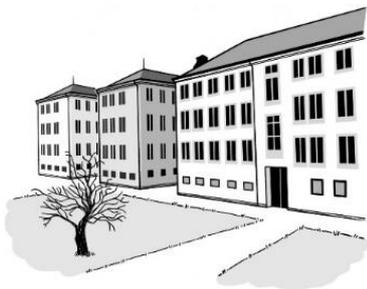


The **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care** is looking into abuse that happened to people in care.

The Commission is **not** part of the Government.



The Government cannot tell the Commission what to do.



Being in care means that an **institution** was in charge of your care.



Institutions are places run by the government or other people that have staff members.

Abuse can be:



- **physical** – a person kicking or hitting you



- **sexual** – when someone does sexual things to you that you do not want them to like:

- touching your body or private parts



- kissing you

- making you have sex with them – this is called rape



- **emotional** – yelling or saying things that are not nice about the person



- **neglect** – not giving someone the things or care they need.



The Commission has been asked to find out:

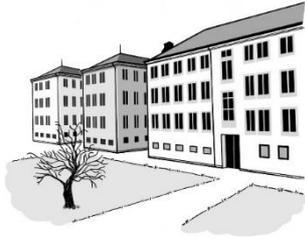


- what kinds of abuse happened in care
- how many people were abused in different places
- how different groups were abused like:



- Māori
- Pacific people
- disabled people.





The Commission wants to know:

- how people ended up in care
- what abuse has happened
- why the abuse happened
- how the abuse has changed things for people who were abused
- what changes have been made to make things better
- what more can be done to stop abuse.





The Commission also wants to know how the government / other institutions should give **redress** and **rehabilitation** to survivors.



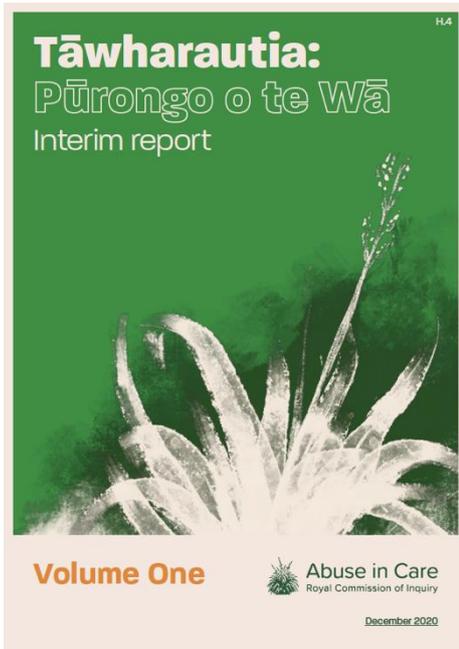
Redress is when you try to make things right.

It could be things like:

- saying sorry
- giving money as a way of saying sorry.



Rehabilitation is support to carry on with life like counselling.



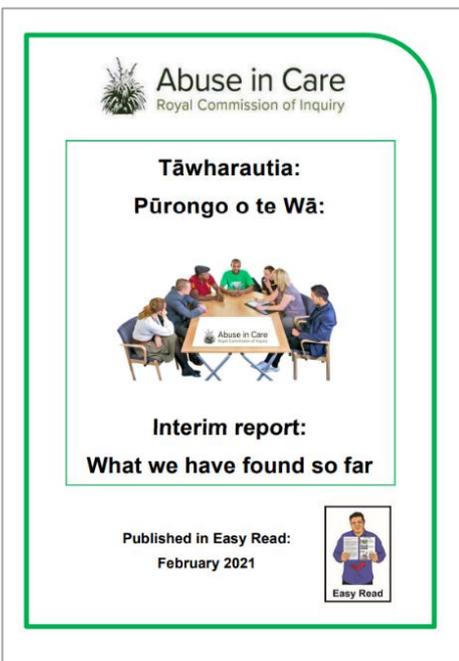
You can find the full report on the Commission website.

The full report has information about all of the things that the Commission has looked into.

The full report is called:

Tāwharautia: Pūrongo o te Wā – Interim Report.

There is an Easy Read summary of the full Interim.



You can find both the report and Easy Read summary on this **website**:

www.abuseincare.org.nz

What was the Lake Alice child and adolescent unit?

1972

The Lake Alice unit was set up in 1972.



It was part of the Lake Alice Psychiatric Unit.



Lake Alice was part of Manawatū Hospital in the rohe of Ngā Wairiki / Ngāti Apa.



These government departments supported setting up a unit:

- Department of Health
- Department of Social Welfare
- Department of Education.

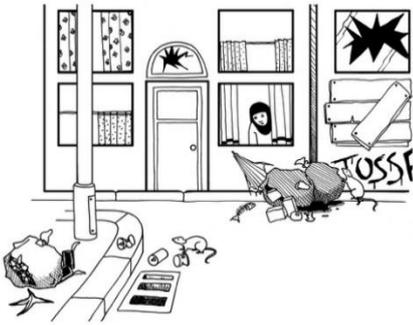


In this document we will call the Lake Alice child and adolescent unit the **Lake Alice unit.**



The Lake Alice unit was set up to treat children and young people who had:

- mental distress
- mental illness.



Many children and young people at the Lake Alice unit:

- came from poor parts of the community
- had problems with:
 - speech
 - behaviour
- did **not** have a diagnosis of a mental illness that was:
 - very bad for them
 - would need a hospital stay.



The Lake Alice unit was a place where people were abused.



The abuse was led by a **psychiatrist** working there called Dr Selwyn Leeks.



A **psychiatrist** is supposed to assist people with their mental health.

This means assisting people to feel better in their minds when they are having trouble.



Many other staff working at the Lake Alice Unit:

- did not know how to help the children or young people properly



- thought the children and young people had bad behaviour

- did not understand what made the children and young people have that behaviour



- did not have the right:
 - support in their work
 - training to do their work well.



For many children and young people
Lake Alice was a place of **tūkino**.



Tūkino means:

- misery
- neglect
- terror
- torment.

Who went to the Lake Alice unit?



Children and young people were sent to the Lake Alice unit from:

- their homes
- schools
- foster homes
- state-run family homes / residences
- other hospitals
- child health clinics / hostels.

Lots of **tamariki** and **rangatahi** were sent to Lake Alice.



Tamariki and **rangatahi** means
Māori children and young people.



We do not know how many of the children and young people sent to the Lake Alice unit were disabled.



The Department of Social Welfare probably did **not** have the power to:

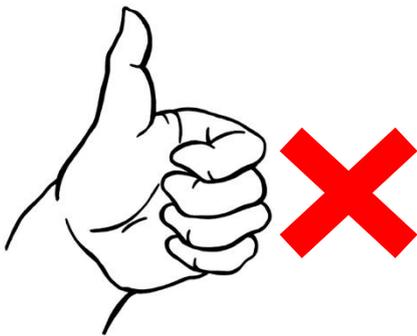
- send children and young people to the Lake Alice unit without their **consent**
- treat conditions in children and young people without their consent
- keep them there without their consent.





Consent means if a person says yes to something.

Without consent means the person was not asked or did not give consent.



The Department of Social Welfare did not get consent from the children and young people at the Lake Alice Unit.



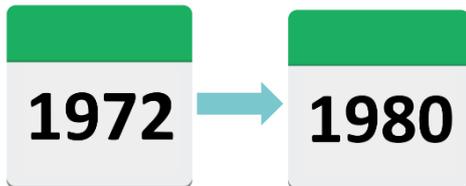
They also did not tell whānau / families everything about how the children and young people were doing.

What happened at the Lake Alice unit?



This section of this report is the most upsetting part to read.

You may like to take a break from reading here.



The Lake Alice unit was open for 8 years.

In those 8 years children and young people were abused by:



- Dr Selwyn Leeks
- other staff members who worked at the Lake Alice unit.



The abuse included:

- physical violence
- sexual violence
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- threats
- **degradation**
- other types of **humiliation**.



Degradation / humiliation mean cruel ways of making people feel like they have no worth.



Some children and young people were tortured with **electric shocks**.



An **electric shock** is when electricity is used to cause pain.

These electric shocks were often done with no pain relief.



The shocks were done to the:

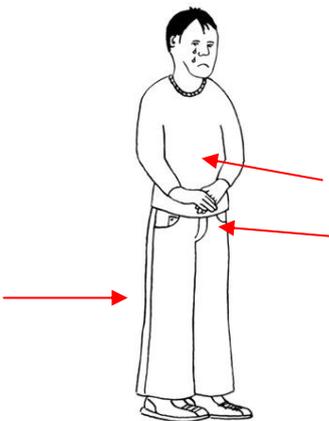
- head



- arms

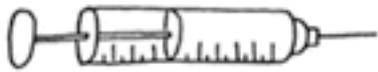
- back

- stomach



- genitals such as penis

- legs.

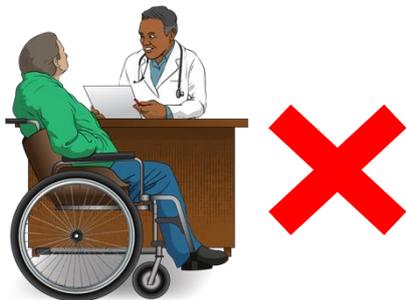


Another type of torture done to children and young people was an injection of a drug called paraldehyde.



This paraldehyde injection:

- was painful
- made the children and young people unable to move
- was given to the children and young people as a punishment
- was not being used as a proper therapy
- was not being used for medical reasons.

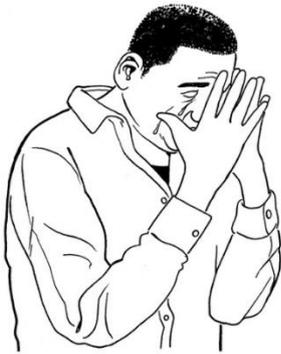


Some children and young people were held in **solitary confinement**.



Solitary confinement means being locked in a room by themselves away from other people.

The abuse children and young people experienced at the Lake Alice unit meant they:



- suffered from very bad mental health
- suffered spiritually
- did not get a good education
- found it hard to concentrate
- found it hard to learn things.





The children and young people were also:

- anxious / worried
- stressed
- scared
- angry.



Māori and Pacific children were:

- not able to be part of their **culture**
- called racist names
- treated worse.

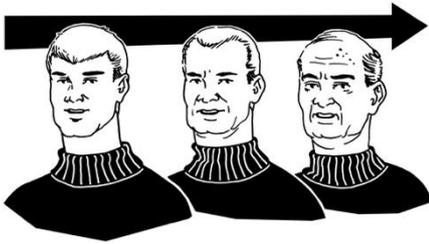




Culture is a way of life for a group of people that includes things like their:

- language
- ideas / beliefs
- art.

What the abuse did to people



Survivors of the Lake Alice unit felt the effect of the abuse for the rest of their lives.



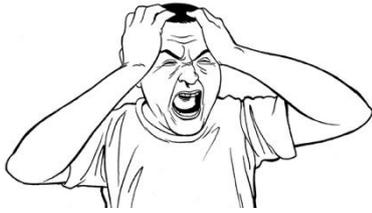
Survivors is what the Commission calls people who have been through abuse in care.



The abuse affected their:

- physical health
- mental health.





The effects the survivors felt throughout their lives include:

- outbursts of anger
- having trouble remembering things
- **hypervigilance** which is being scared all the time about their safety even when they are in a safe place
- being scared of going back to Lake Alice even though they knew the hospital was closed
- feeling the need to use drugs and alcohol
- migraines / headaches because of the electric shocks
- health issues because of the sexual abuse.



Some survivors could not bear the pain they felt.



Some of these survivors:

- **self harmed** which means hurting themselves because of how they felt
- took their own lives.



Most survivors also lost connections to their:

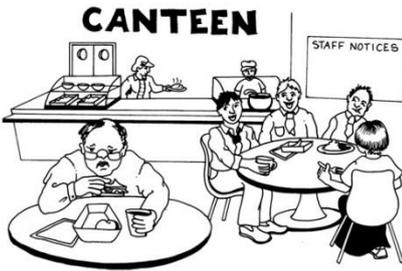
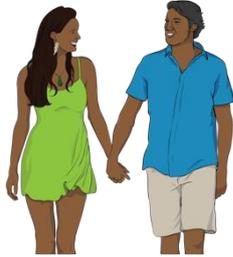
- whānau / family
- culture.





Most survivors also:

- found it hard to trust other people
- found it hard to have relationships
- found it hard to get / hold on to jobs.



What should have happened to stop the abuse?



The Department of Social Welfare and the Department of Health did not do a good job of checking that the Lake Alice unit was a good place for children and young people.



They did not check the Lake Alice unit:

- often / enough times
- carefully.



People tried to complain about abuse by:

- Dr Leeks
- Lake Alice staff members.





It was difficult to make complaints about the treatment for both:

- children and young people
- their whānau / family.



When the Department of Social Welfare did get complaints they did not look at them properly.



Survivors tried complaining about the abuse to **public institutions** and **entities**.



Public institutions and **entities** are:

- parts of the government
- services meant to assist many people.



Public services and entities that were asked to do something about the abuse included:

- Office of the Ombudsman
- Police
- Medical Association
- Medical Council
- New Zealand branch of Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- Department of Health
- Department of Education
- Department of Social Welfare
- Cabinet (Government).



New Zealand Government



Some other places that were also told about the abuse were:

- Crown Law
- Health and Disability Commissioner
- Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC).



Even though people complained to all of these places:



- Dr Leeks and Lake Alice staff were not held to account for their actions



- survivors did not get good enough / any **redress**.



Redress is when you try to make things right.

It could be things like:

- saying sorry
- giving money as a way of saying sorry.

In the year 2001 some of the survivors had a **group settlement** with the Crown.

A **group settlement** is when a group of people works together to get redress because:

- it is easier to work together
- a group of people has more power than people on their own.



The group of survivors had to fight hard to get the group settlement.



The group settlement included:

- an apology / saying sorry
- some money.



In 2021 the Police charged 1 Lake Alice staff member.

But by this time Dr Leeks and other staff members did not face charges because they were:

- already dead
- too frail / old to go to court.





In the years:

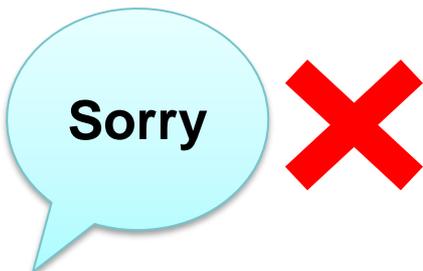
- 2020
- 2022



the United Nations Committee Against Torture found that New Zealand had **not**:



- done the right things to look properly at the complaints of torture at the Lake Alice unit



- given redress.

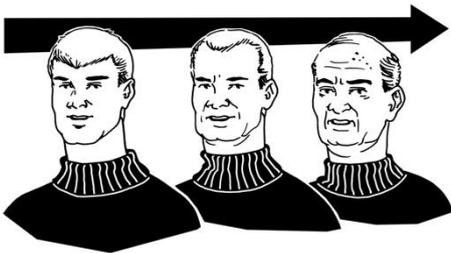
Our Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care found that:



- children and young people at Lake Alice were “out of sight and out of mind”



- many children and young people were tortured / abused at the Lake Alice unit



- many children and young people suffered lifelong harm by people who were supposed to look after them



- it is wrong that no one has ever been found accountable
- it is wrong that survivors are still waiting for justice.



The Royal Commission of Inquiry also said that:

- what happened at the Lake Alice unit is a shameful chapter in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand



- the next step is to have proper redress and make sure tragedies like this never happen again.

Where to find more information



You can find more information on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care website.



The website is at:

www.abuseincare.org.nz



You can also talk to someone at the Commission:

Phone: 0800 222 727



Email: contact@abuseincare.org.nz



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